

## “One and Done”

When a woman has a mastectomy, there are several reasons she may choose to opt out of breast reconstruction. Often, the reason is to avoid additional surgeries—and additional pain, risk, expense, and time lost to medical treatment and recovery. Maybe she...

- is at higher risk than average, for example, due to diabetes or trouble with anesthesia. She may be in her seventies—or older.
- worries she may not have much time left to live, due to her advanced age or the possibility of metastasis, which is terminal.
- prefers to return to her professional obligations, which may be more important to her than having reconstructed breasts.
- chooses to focus on caring for family, pets, or others depending on her.
- has survived trauma—related or unrelated to medical care—and feels unwilling or unable to entrust the care of her body to others for breast reconstruction.
- has suffered an unsuccessful attempt (or two) at breast reconstruction, then decided to “go flat” or ran out of reconstruction options.

### Women may elect to “go flat” for any reason.

Surgeons, especially plastic surgeons, must not “leave a little extra, in case she changes her mind.” If the surgeon is not comfortable taking everything to produce a smooth, flat result (within reason), she or he should discuss this with the patient, prior to surgery, and refer the patient to a different doctor, if desired by either party.

## Why aren't you wearing a shirt?

**Not Putting on a Shirt** is a grassroots movement started by Kim Bowles, a Pittsburgh scientist, artist, wife, mother, cancer survivor, and topless protester. Her activism here is **inspired by her own unsatisfactory cosmetic outcome following mastectomy.**

She had simply **wanted to get back to life after just one surgery**; now Kim has to choose whether to live with a cosmetic effect that she finds abhorrent, or to take on additional risk--and sacrifice energy, money, and precious time with her family--just to get **a cosmetic result she feels she can live with.**

All Kim asked for was **acknowledgment**, from the surgeon and hospital, of the wrong that had been done, and a **commitment to prevent this from happening to future patients.** But her pleas fell on deaf ears. So, Kim has chosen to invest herself in helping future mastectomy patients across the US and beyond—especially those who choose to “go flat.”

**Not Putting on a Shirt's mission** is to advocate for satisfactory cosmetic outcomes—as agreed upon by mastectomy patient and surgeon(s)—for those who choose to “go flat.” We inform and support patients, demand increased accountability for medical professionals and institutions, and collaborate with patients—and the surgeons who care for them—in our efforts to establish resources and protocols that will make a difference.

## Not Putting on a Shirt

**Advocating for the cosmetic outcome the patient desires following mastectomy**



Kim Bowles, protesting outside Cleveland Clinic, following a year of attempts to get the hospital to talk to her about making changes to their protocols. Kim's plastic surgeon failed to leave her with a cosmetically acceptable flat result, as she requested—and he agreed to. Her sign reads, “Hold surgeons accountable.” June 29, 2018

# Mastectomy Patients Who Asked for a Flat Result

NPoaS sends a special thank you to our courageous friends who are featured here.

## “Flat Enough”

Kim’s result may “look flat enough” at a glance, from a certain angle, or in the right clothing. But **it is not**.

Her plastic surgeon’s **only job was to make her flat**. He agreed to produce a “smooth flat result”, but **then left Kim with excess tissue** in the front, as well as pockets of fat (often referred to as “dog ears”) under her arms. Note the absence of dog ears on the other flat ladies.

When a woman expects a flat result, but is left with an unsatisfactory result for **no good reason**, she may feel betrayed, angry, depressed, violated, deceived, or ashamed.

## A Little Left Behind

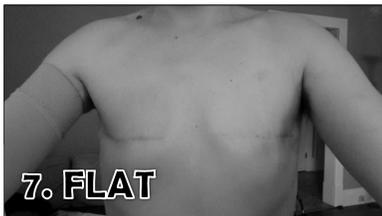
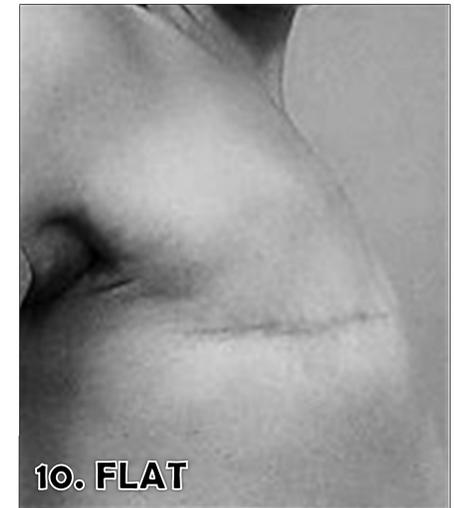
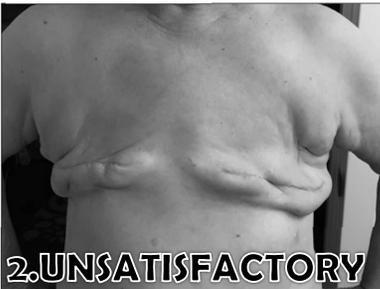
**This is happening to women everywhere.** They go into mastectomy expecting a flat result, only for their chest to look like the unsatisfactory results pictured to the right.

Some **feel they have no choice** but to have more surgery to get a better appearance, which others may not be able to afford.

Others still are not well enough for more surgery. They just have **to live with the disfigurement** that might have been prevented, if their surgeons hadn’t “left a little behind in case you change your mind.” Some even sue.

Of course, some try to ignore it to just get on with their lives. Or worse, the cancer spread, so they need to prioritize the time they have left and focus on survival.

Kim fought alone for over a year. Then she started Not Putting on a Shirt.



**Shouldn't fighting cancer be your toughest fight  
when you have breast cancer?**



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